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**Good, bad and very bad part-time jobs for women? Re-examining the importance of occupational class for job quality since the 'great recession' in Britain.**

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**Abstract**

Britain has long stood out in Europe for its extensive but low quality part-time labour market dominated by women workers, who are concentrated in lower-level jobs demanding few skills and low levels of education, offering lower wage rates and restricted advancement opportunities. This article explores trends in part-time job quality for women up to and beyond the recession of 2008/9, and asks whether post-recessionary job quality remains differentiated by occupational class. A pre-recessionary narrowing of the part-time/full-time gap in job quality appears to have been maintained for the women in higher level part-time jobs, while part- *and* full-timers in lower-level jobs suffered the worst effects of the recession, signalling deepening occupational class inequalities among working women.

**Key words**

Part-time, job quality, gender, occupational class, recession

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## Introduction

For over half a century, concerns about the low quality of part-time jobs in Britain have stimulated academic research (Warren, 2015, Felstead and Gallie, 2004), worker campaigns (Heery, 1998), and policy interventions to improve the employment conditions of part-time workers (e.g. the Protection of Employees (Part-Time Work) Act, 2001). The low quality of part-time employment is recognised as influencing the degree of workplace inequality by both occupational class and gender, as the growth of part-time jobs in post-war Britain occurred predominantly in lower-level jobs, largely taken up by women.

Before the 'great recession' hit in 2008, there had been several encouraging developments with the potential to improve part-time employment, including significant changes to regulations; government initiatives to create more and better part-time posts (e.g., the Women and Work Commission, 2006); and recognition from some employers of a business case for increasing flexible working arrangements in better quality jobs (Edwards and Robinson, 2004). One might assume, therefore, that differences in quality between full-time and part-time jobs would shrink as a consequence of these developments. Indeed, evidence did suggest a narrowing of the full-time/part-time job quality gap before the recession (Felstead et al., 2015; Gallie and Zhou, 2011).

Even with the onset of the economic crisis, there were promising signs that new opportunities for quality part-time jobs were emerging (Lyonette and Baldauf, 2010). In contrast to previous recessions, many employers were keen to retain valued staff, by widening part-time opportunities for more diverse staff or requiring workers to reduce their hours to preserve

their job. Modifications to work-time arrangements, albeit as outcomes of economic crisis, could challenge the traditional preferences by employers and managers for full-time workers, particularly in higher-level occupations (Lewis and Rapoport, 2009). On a less positive note, concerns were raised about the quality of part-time jobs after the recession, which created the potential for more job-seekers taking part-time jobs when they would have preferred full-time, as well as enforced cuts to hours of full-time workers, increasing work-time underemployment within the part-time labour force (Warren, 2015). The recession also increased the potential for a decline in both the objective *and* subjective reality of jobs, with employers adopting cost-cutting strategies to maintain a competitive advantage and the UK government pursuing greater de-regulation of the labour market while simultaneously addressing the public sector deficit via radical austerity measures (Green et al., 2015). Such measures include reductions in public spending, generating job cuts, job insecurity and wage freezes across the public sector.

This article extends the literature on part-time job quality post-recession, incorporating the inter-related factors of gender and occupational class. Using quantitative data which allows an examination of part-time job quality up to and beyond 2008-9, it examines the persistence of a familiar portrayal of part-time jobs as lower in quality than full-time jobs and predominantly taken by women in lower-level occupations, and whether or not certain aspects of part-time jobs have improved or deteriorated, leading to a narrowing or widening of the part-time/full-time job quality gap.

### **The expansion of part-time jobs, gender, class and job quality**

In order to understand the status of part-time jobs, it is necessary to reflect upon the expansion of part-time work over the last fifty years. Academic attention to part-time jobs waxed and waned but there have been distinct spikes of interest in response to periods of growth. The first major rapid expansion of part-time jobs occurred in the 1960s and 1970s, leading to deliberations over how to account for the increase and the ramifications for workplaces and for workers' lives. Gender and occupational class are core to these trends and explanations.

Early studies of part-time jobs explained growth largely with reference to employers' search for new labour supplies. Keynesian economic policies, an expanding Welfare State and full employment of the 'traditional' labour supply, men and single women, created a demand for a new type of employee. Women with caring responsibilities were a large, relatively untapped, labour supply (Beechey and Perkins, 1987). What was remarkable for early analysts was that part-time employment for women continued to expand during periods of economic downturn. Employer demands for part-time workers began to be theorised as less about enticing in a new labour supply and rather with moves to economic restructuring. Part-time workers were recruited to meet varying or unpredictable labour market demand and to provide cheaper, more readily replaceable, flexible employees in 'secondary' or 'peripheral' labour markets, where jobs were lower quality than in 'primary' markets (Atkinson, 1987; Doeringer and Piore, 1971). These theories established both the level of part-time jobs *and* their quality as core topics for study in times of economic boom and crisis.

This theoretical heritage is distinctly gendered and classed. It is no coincidence that the types of

work where part-time jobs became firmly established were seen to be suitable for women's (assumed) feminised skills and interests, and women, who entered part-time employment in huge numbers, became concentrated in lower-level occupations, facing substantial inequalities in the workplace (Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998). Working part-time, and in many cases scaling back on careers (Blair-Loy, 2003), might be represented as a reflection of the 'choices' made by women, but influential researchers argue that women's 'work-time capability' (Fagan and Walthery, 2011) is restricted by their normative assignment to caring and domestic work. The high costs of formal childcare in Britain also impact women's 'choices' (Hegewisch and Gornick, 2011) and highlight an occupational class differentiation between full- and part-time working women.

Analyses of class inequalities are essential for the wider study of women's work. In Bradley's (2016) exploration of gender and the sociology of work and employment, she reflects how feminist sociology grappled to understand the ways in which 'intersections' between gender and class shape working lives (and see Crompton 2006). Influential researchers from Glucksmann (as Cavendish, 1982) and Pollert (1981), to Bradley (1989) and Crompton (e.g. Crompton and Jones, 1984), established a persuasive case for the study of class inequalities among women workers in general. The significance of a class lens applies equally to the examination of women's part-time jobs. Class underpins many of the major themes debated (Warren, 2010), ranging from who opts to work part-time to the classed ramifications of working in a low versus high-level part-time job.

This article focuses specifically on occupational class, drawing upon Crompton's analysis of

class and employment. Crompton argues that occupational class is important, alongside gender, because of the significance of the types of employment experienced by different groups of workers. She states: 'for most people class outcomes are in large part a consequence of the kinds of employment available to them' (Crompton 2010: 10). The 'kinds of employment' known to be available to female part-timers are in particular ('feminised') occupational sectors and at particular (lower) levels (Crompton and Lyonette, 2010; Warren, 2010). Even women with higher qualifications and skills tend to crowd into lower-level occupations if they have children, reflecting the limited opportunities available for part-time working in higher-level jobs (Grant et al. 2005). The majority of those working part-time in higher-level jobs have managed to negotiate a reduction in hours, rather than being hired as a part-time employee (Tilly, 1996; Tomlinson et al., 2009). As a result, there are clear occupational class differences *within* the female part-time labour market, with strong occupational polarisation characterising women in part-time jobs (Warren and Lyonette, 2015).

### **Measuring job quality**

While gender and occupational class are well-established factors in any analysis of the quality of part-time work, the conceptualisation and measurement of job quality is complex. At its core, the notion of job quality is that the better quality a job is, the more positive its outcomes for workers (Holman, 2013). In measurement terms, the longest-serving indicator of a job's quality is what it pays, but additional dimensions include security, autonomy, career ladders, training, work-time and representation (Carré et al., 2012; Gallie, 2013; Green et al., 2015; Kalleberg, 2011; Taylor, 2017; Warhurst et al., 2017). There is also a dedicated growing



literature on the quality of part-time jobs (Lyonette et al., 2010). Tilly's (1996) development of 'bad' versus 'good' part-time jobs was an influential critique of the idea that part-time jobs are homogenously bad. Tilly identified good part-time jobs located within primary labour markets, designed to attract and retain highly skilled workers, differentiating these 'retention' from 'secondary' part-time jobs according to: pay and benefits; skill, training and responsibility; turnover; and promotion ladders, citing also the importance of good quality work-time.

Shaped by prominent ideas around job quality, this article re-examines the extent of part-time working in Britain, its dominance by women and the importance of occupational class. It contributes to the broad study of job quality that, as Kalleberg (2016) laments, too often ignores such factors as class and gender in its dedicated focus on jobs. The article explores whether the economic crisis narrowed the part-time/full-time gap in job quality, as identified prior to 2008, or whether the story is a more negative one, with women's full-time jobs maintaining and even increasing their advantage over part-time jobs.

### **Data source and data considerations**

The article draws upon secondary analysis of a large data set, the *Skills and Employment Survey series* (SES). The SES is valuable because of its long time-frame, including three years after the end of the 2008-9 recession, and its extensive details of job quality. It combines a sub-set of identical questions from six separate nationally-representative cross-sectional surveys. The contributing surveys are the 'Social Change and Economic Life Initiative', 1986 (sample size of 4,047); 'Employment in Britain', 1992 (3,855); the 'Skills Surveys' of 1997, 2001 and 2006 (2,467; 4,470; 7,787); and the 'Skills and Employment Survey', 2012 (3,200) (Felstead et al. 2014

Technical Appendix)<sup>i</sup>. The definition of part-time working is set at less than 30 hours a week, as is customary in analysis of British data.

The measurement of part-time job quality is inspired by Tilly's (1996) differentiation between good and bad part-time jobs via: pay and benefits; skill, training and responsibility; turnover; and promotion ladders. The article develops work-time into a separate dimension to reflect advances in the measurement of job quality (Kalleberg, 2011, Green et al., 2015) and to build upon the previous research of Warren and Lyonette (2015) on the quality of women's part-time jobs. Twelve variables are analysed (Table 1), first separately and then merged into one summative variable. Building upon Tilly (1996), a 'bad' quality category is specified for each variable so that each one is dichotomised (into 'Bad' and 'Not bad' categories, with values set at 1 and 0, respectively). For full details of the 'Bad' categories, see Table 1. 'Bad' indicates the less advantageous dimensions of each variable, with the decision shaped by sample size considerations. A preferred target was set between a quarter and a third of workers having the 'bad' category on each variable. Some variables hampered that overall approach. For example, the single 'worst' category available on training times was 'No training' and this already included 40% of the women.

TABLE 1 HERE

## 1. Pay

Tilly (1996) examined wages plus 'fringe benefits' (sick pay, health insurance and access to paid

holidays). The latter are critical to his USA context of deficient statutory workplace provisions and a weak healthcare system. For this analysis of employees in Britain, 'pay' focuses solely on wages: the 'bread and butter' measure of job quality (McGovern et al., 2004).

## 2. Skill, training and responsibility

According to Tilly (1996), skills development is a core indicator of job quality, demonstrating the possibilities available to workers to improve their prospects. Many women, particularly after having children, work in part-time jobs which are not fully using their skills (Darton and Hurrell, 2005), representing a substantial loss to the economy and to women's longer-term earnings (Connolly and Gregory, 2008; Warren, 2010). Accordingly, there are influential debates over whether female part-timers in Britain are disproportionately 'working below potential' (Grant et al., 2005). Part-time workers also receive poorer opportunities for skills development and training than similar full-timers, though there has been some deliberation whether all workers benefited equally from a general up-skilling of jobs over time (Gallie et al., 1998). Finally, part-timers have had less discretion over their work and fewer responsibilities (Bailey and Madden, 2015; Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003). For Tilly (1996), autonomy at work is associated with greater potential for fulfilment. Job control is also known to offset negative effects of other dimensions of the job, and can produce higher levels of wellbeing (Sengupta et al., 2005).

The article examines four variables: 'Educational mismatch', 'Learning time', 'Training time' and 'Discretion.' For discretion, an SES scale measures responsibility in jobs over: how hard respondents' work, what tasks to do, how to do the task, and quality standards. All components are scored 0-3 (3 = highest discretion), with the discretion scale ranging from 0-12.

### 3. Turnover

Are part-time workers in precarious jobs? Do part-time jobs offer a bridge into secure employment or a trap with uncertain prospects (O'Reilly and Bothfeld, 2002). These are established questions in the study of part-time employment but the onset of the economic crisis raised additional concerns over which groups were most likely to shoulder the threat and reality of job loss and deteriorating security. Two variables are examined: job contract and self-reported chances of job loss.

### 4. Promotion ladders

Tilly (1996) noted that the structures of promotion ladders tend to disadvantage part-timers in 'retention' and 'secondary' jobs. While the latter can be trapped in entry-level jobs, even retention part-timers face problems because career advancement beyond certain levels invariably requires moving to a full-time post. Accordingly, part-timers in better quality jobs can end up 'perching' in the middle of job ladders, while others opt for readily-available lower-level jobs, especially during the key child-rearing years, and often remain unable to get back onto the career ladder (Grant et al., 2005). To explore part-timers' promotion prospects, workers are asked to rate their chances for promotion in the current organization.

### 5. The quality of work-time

The suitability of work-time shapes both job search activity and reported job satisfaction of female part-timers, especially for those who need to reconcile employment with other roles

(Booth and Van Ours, 2008; Zou, 2015). Working time that is compatible with family responsibilities is often explicitly traded for other measures of job quality (Gallie et al., 1998; Walters, 2005). Good quality work-time also includes work schedules and flexibility to adjust hours to fit other activities. For Fagan (1996), working unsocial hours, with schedules over which workers have little control, can detract from family and social life, with self-determination of work-time greater for those in higher level jobs. Yet the degree of time autonomy may become 'notional' when work-time intensity is heavy and increasing, thus the tempo, speed or pace of work are also implicated in the quality of work-time. Tempo shapes the experience of time spent in the workplace, and an excessive pace can also heighten negative spillover from a job to the rest of life. Women working part-time, especially those in more senior occupations, may find that they have too much to do in a short space of time (e.g., Smithson et al., 2004) while working to tight deadlines. Finally, if work-time routinely extends beyond scheduled hours, then job to home spillover can escalate. After the recession of 2008, many companies cut their workforces, raising concerns that the same amount of work was being done with reduced staffing, impacting the work-time quality of surviving employees (Felstead and Green, 2017). To tap into work-time quality, the article explores four variables: autonomy over start and finish times, whether working to high speed, working to tight deadlines and frequency of working overtime.

### *Identifying bad and 'very bad' jobs*

To find the lowest quality jobs, on aggregate, a variable was constructed that merged the 12 dichotomised variables (that each had values: 1 'Bad', 0 'Not bad'). Some jobs fare well on certain elements of quality but do poorly on others (Kalleberg, 2016) so this enables a count

of how many bad characteristics each person's job had (out of a potential 12)<sup>ii</sup>. Finally, women with five or more bad dimensions to their jobs were defined as having 'very bad' job quality. This cut-off was chosen to target the most-disadvantaged, not minuscule group of workers: it resulted in 25% of women in 'very bad' jobs in 2006<sup>iii</sup>. The weighted number of female part-timers in 'very bad' jobs in the smallest survey (2012) was 119. The 'very bad' dichotomous variable was entered into a series of binomial logistic regressions to explore the relationship between women's job quality and work-time. Logistic regression models the probability that workers have 'very bad' jobs. The odds ratios give the odds of being in a 'very bad' job for each independent variable, controlling for other variables. Coefficients greater than 1 indicate that women are more likely to have 'very bad jobs' than the reference group; scores less than 1 indicate lower odds. Binomial logistic regression is used because the dependent variable only has two values.

Lastly, this article employs standard occupational classification (SOC) to differentiate among workers by their occupational class position. As a measure of occupational class, SOC overlaps with but is not identical to social class, one being job-based and one being person-based. An important connection with social class schemas (e.g. Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992) is that SOC helps distinguish between employees in higher-level jobs, who have more discretion over their work, from those in intermediate roles and those with a 'labour contract' that pays for a quantity of time. Such occupationally-based classifications remain valuable in class analysis (Crompton 2010), often for such pragmatic reasons as their wide availability in large surveys (Savage et al., 2013). Allocating workers to occupational class bands, even using this leading schema, is not without its challenges because broad bands span jobs with diverse

characteristics (Gallie, 2015). Further detail is lost because, due to sample size limitations, workers are sub-categorized into three groupings: Managers, Professionals and Associate Professional/Technical (higher); Administrative, Trades and Personal (middle); and Sales, Operatives and Elementary (lower).

Although the SES offers one of the most extensive collections of variables on job quality over time, it does not capture all dimensions (Green et al., 2014). It does not allow us to see if women are working part-time in/voluntarily<sup>iv</sup>. Only workers aged 20-60 were sampled in the earlier surveys. Though the SES is based on sample sizes in the thousands, we still need to be aware of small numbers when it comes to the rarer sub-groups such as female part-timers in higher occupations. Despite these limitations, there are details of work-time and occupation on a weighted sample of 1,367 female employees in 2012 (2,973 in 2006). The SES series, like other large surveys, has also seen a fall in response rates over the years (75% in 1986 to 49% in 2012. Felstead et al., 2014). Weights are provided to maintain representativeness (by sex, age and occupation) and to correct for non-response. All data analysed are weighted.

## **Results**

### ***Women's part-time jobs and occupation***

The economic upheaval of the great recession and the period of austerity that followed did little to alter long-term trends in levels of part-time working among employed women. Since 1986, a steady substantial minority (around 40%) in the SES worked part-time (Figure 1a).

Figures from the larger *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) support this pattern (Figure 1b). Levels of part-time employment in the SES were higher for women with dependent children, but again with no dramatic variation over time.

FIGURE 1 HERE

The data show both positive and negative developments in part-time workers' occupational positions over time. Encouragingly, by 2012, part-timers were spread more evenly throughout the occupational hierarchy than in the 1980s, including almost a third working in higher roles compared with only 13% two decades earlier (Figure 2). On the other hand, a clear part-time/full-time occupational gap remained. In 2012, 55% of full-time workers (31% of part-timers) were in higher occupations, and far fewer full- than part-time workers were in lower jobs. In fact, the proportion of part-timers in lower-level jobs remained unchanged between 2006 and 2012, suggesting a stalling of pre-recessionary developments in narrowing the classed part-time/full-time gap.

FIGURE 2 HERE

### ***Dimensions of Job Quality***

To examine the quality of women's part- versus full-time jobs and variation among part-time workers by occupation, this section focuses upon the pre and post-recession years, 2006 and 2012.



## **1. Pay**

How did female part-time workers compare with full-time workers in their average wages before and after the recession? An aggregate part-time/full-time gross hourly wage gap persisted, attributable to a range of causal factors, including the strong influence of differing educational levels on earning capacity (Olsen et al., 2010). However, that gap disguises substantial occupational wage inequality among part-time jobs (that contributes to a weak overall association between work-time and pay.  $\phi = 0.2^v$ ). Fully 82% of lower part-timers were in the poorest waged third of women workers in 2012 (77% in 2006), compared with only 5% of higher part-timers. That earnings are linked to occupational class is unsurprising, and this finding also applies to female full-time workers. What is discouraging is the tenacity of the severe and even deepening relative wage disadvantage experienced by part-time workers in lower-level jobs.

## **2. Skill, training and discretion**

Good quality jobs match a worker's level of education, provide opportunities for development and allow the exertion of discretion over work, according to Tilly (1996). The results revealed some contradictory trends for part-timers, alongside persistent inequalities by occupational class. A part-time/full-time gap in educational mismatch remained significant into 2012 (Table 2) but, again, lower part-timers fared most poorly of the three part-time groups (resulting in an overall weak association between work-time and mismatch.  $\phi = 0.1$ ). The lower full-timers also fared poorly. Part-time/full-time aggregate gaps also persisted in how long it had taken respondents to learn to do their job well, and the length of training received but the occupational

gap was so sizeable on these two measures that what stands out is the strikingly low quality jobs of part-timers in lower occupations. Within-group variation showed greater drop in quality for the lower part-time group over time. As well as continuing between and within-class inequalities, these findings demonstrate a stagnation, and even a deterioration on some measures, in the position of part-timers during the crisis. In terms of discretion, however, a part-time/full-time gap disappeared after 2006 and, positively, this is because part-time workers fared better in 2012 and not because full-timers fared worse. Occupational variation persisted, with lower workers having the least discretion, both part- and full-timers. Having control over ways of working can help offset other negative dimensions of a job. This is highly relevant for lower-level workers, who emerge repeatedly with weak and sometimes worsening job quality. These workers did see a reduction in bad scores on discretion into 2012, yet retained their occupational class disadvantage.

TABLE 2 HERE

### **3. *Turnover***

Are female part-time workers in riskier jobs than full-timers? Only a small minority of respondents were not permanent workers, though a slightly wider part-time/full-time gap developed after 2006. There was no gap regarding self-reported risk of becoming unemployed in the next 12 months, although such feelings of job insecurity increased between 2006 and 2012 for all groups, amid a deepening economic crisis. Within occupational class groups, the women who stood out as most likely to feel their jobs were at risk were part-time workers in higher jobs in 2012. Higher part-timers were heavily concentrated in 'Public administration, education and

health' jobs (63% in 2012, compared with e.g. 9% of lower part-timers and 51% of higher full-timers) and it was female public sector workers who were being hit hard by job cuts at that time (The Fawcett Society 2012).

#### **4. *Promotion ladders***

Do promotion ladders disadvantage part-timers, as Tilly (1996) argued? A part-time penalty did emerge in perceived possibilities for promotion. In 2012, almost a quarter of part-timers reported no chance of promotion (17% of full-time workers), and this was not because the women had reached the highest possible level in their organisation. The overall association was not large because lower part-time workers were the group most likely to have no promotion chances at all. The distance separating the three groups of part-timers did narrow by 2012, but as a result of higher- and middle-level workers experiencing slightly heightened risks of stagnation rather than a positive development for lower women. As Tilly noted, even part-timers in retention jobs can face disadvantage in workplace promotion ladders, unable to move to the highest rungs while maintaining part-time hours. Indeed, the part-time/full-time gap in promotion chances was widest among higher workers, reinforcing the idea of fewer part-time opportunities in the very top jobs.

#### **5. *The quality of working time.***

The extant literature suggests that work-time is a dimension of job quality where female part-timers might be faring better than full-timers, because they may explicitly have traded good work-time for other weaker aspects of their jobs, but there are likely to be distinct occupational

class disparities. In this analysis, part-timers were not more advantaged in terms of autonomy over start and finish times. This means they had no extra flexibility to adjust work hours to fit other commitments, if required. Lower-level workers fared most poorly here, signalling the continued importance of occupational class for access to this valuable form of autonomous work-time. However, part-timers overall were indeed better protected than full-timers from working at high speed, to tight deadlines and from working overtime, supporting the notion that part-timers benefit from those aspects of job quality that concern the pace and spread of work-time. Again, however, the aggregate part-time/full-time gaps were weakened because of occupational class differences. Among the part-timers, lower workers were far more likely to work at high speed while higher workers were more likely to work overtime. The same occupational pattern was demonstrated among full-timers. In other words, although occupational class works in opposite directions here, these findings affirm its importance on key measures of work-time quality. Lastly on overtime, before the recession, very few part-timers (16%) reported work-time that routinely extended beyond scheduled hours, and so were better shielded from the negative consequences for job-home spillover that overtime can signal. Yet, all groups saw a rise in overtime work by 2012, adding support to concerns that recessionary cut-backs meant the same amount of work was being done with reduced staffing, impacting part- and full-timers across occupational levels.

### **Are part-time jobs very bad jobs?**

To conclude, the article examines how many bad job quality indicators were experienced by workers in 2006 and 2012. Most women (95% in 2012) had at least one of the 12 bad elements to their jobs<sup>vi</sup>. The bad quality variable is plotted in Figure 3: in both years, higher proportions

of part-time workers were employed in jobs with more bad qualities. A part-time job quality penalty thus emerges once more, with bad job dimensions accumulating more for part-timers, rather than being compensated by other positive properties of the job.

FIGURE 3 HERE

Women with five or more bad dimensions to their jobs were defined as having ‘very bad’ job quality. Slightly more workers had ‘very bad’ jobs in 2012 than in 2006 (rising from 33% to 35% for part-timers; 21% to 25% for full-timers, and 58% to 65% for lower part-time workers. Table 2). Lacking more years of data, it is not possible to see if these increases continued after 2012. The ‘very bad’ dichotomous variable was entered into a series of binomial logistic regressions to explore the relationship between women’s job quality and work-time while controlling for occupational class because, as seen repeatedly, occupation muddies the picture of any straight part-time/full-time dis/advantage. Table 3 shows the odds of being in a ‘very bad’ job for each independent variable while controlling for other independent variables. To recap, odds ratios greater than 1 indicate that women are more likely to have ‘very bad jobs’ than the reference group and scores less than 1 indicate lower odds. Women’s life-course stage, indicated by age group, marital and motherhood status, is controlled for.

Model 1, with part- or full-time as the only independent variable, supports the argument that overall part-timers were significantly more likely to have ‘very bad’ jobs than full-timers in 2006 and 2012 (odds ratios of 1.8 and 1.6 respectively). Model 2 with only occupation as

independent showed its continued importance over time too, with lower workers faring most poorly in comparison with higher women, and even more so in 2012. Odds ratios (9.9 and 10.2) show that women in lower level jobs had much higher odds of having ‘very bad’ jobs than higher workers (the occupational reference group). The occupation variable exhibited the strongest relationship with the very bad quality measure across all models. Indeed, Model 3 shows that, after controlling for occupational band, working part-time was no longer significant. Adding in interactions between work-time and occupation (Model 4) and life-course control variables (Model 5) had little impact on the direction of results for work-time and occupation. These findings affirm that working part-time rather than full-time is indeed associated with working in a ‘very bad’ job but occupational class is more critical, certainly at this intensity of disadvantage. Women’s lower part-time jobs were very bad quality but lower full-time jobs were poor quality too. Indeed, the part-time/full-time gaps in job quality narrowed at both the top and bottom of the occupational hierarchy between 2006 and 2012.

TABLE 3 HERE

## **Discussion**

Part-time employment has been extensive for women in Britain, with female part-timers heavily concentrated in poorer quality jobs at the lower end of the occupational hierarchy over many years. Although part-time working conditions appeared to be improving pre-recession, the economic crisis heightened long-standing concerns about the quality of this key section of the labour market. This article extends well-developed theories of part-time work by providing a new analysis of trends over time in the quality of women’s part-time jobs by

occupational class, and of particular interest are the years up to and beyond the recession of 2008-9.

Gender and occupational class are fundamental to the study of part-time jobs in Britain. The analysis described here shows both positive and negative developments in the quality of women's part-time jobs, by occupational class. An increase in the proportion of female part-timers in senior positions is evident, implying that the demand for better quality part-time jobs is being met to some extent, with higher-level part-timers moving closer to their full-time peers in job quality. On the other hand, this positive development at the higher occupational levels is counter-balanced by a persistent part-time occupational disadvantage, with the worst of the 'bad' jobs held by female part-timers in lower jobs who face severe, enduring disadvantage.

These conclusions support Bradley's (2016: 88) contention that, though the recession was not 'kind to women', its impact was mediated by class, with women in the highest jobs more 'isolated' from its effects. An increase in part-time jobs at the top adds evidence to the broader process of widening inequalities among workers (Dorling, 2015; Gallie and Zhou, 2011). A narrowing of the part-time/full-time gap in job quality amongst lower workers, due to a worsening of full-time jobs rather than an improvement in part-time, adds further support to deep occupational class disadvantage among women. The recession of 2008/9 appears to have stalled, and even overturned, any pre-recessionary hopes of a positive upward narrowing in job quality between women's part- and full-time jobs: with employers retaining recessionary cost-cutting strategies, and the government maintaining radical austerity

measures, a greater proportion of bad jobs is emerging for women. The findings of this article show, in addition, those remaining in work after recessionary cuts, particularly in the public sector where many women are employed, appear to be working longer (higher-level workers) and faster (lower-level workers), with the same trends demonstrated for part- and full-time workers. The impact of the UK decision to leave the EU is likely to affect the availability of quality part-time jobs and should be examined closely in future research: wider flexible working policies have increased over time, largely as a consequence of EU regulations, and there is uncertainty around how these regulations, and others attempting to regulate the quality of part-time work, will 'evolve' as the UK loosens its ties with the EU.

In analysing the SES data, a contribution is also made to the debate surrounding the measurement of the quality of part-time jobs. The complexity of job quality as a concept means that using one indicator leads to only a partial picture. It can be inappropriate to categorise one type of job as fully good or fully bad (Vidal, 2013). Some, perhaps most, jobs have good *and* bad features: high wages but high work pressure, for example, or job security but restricted promotion opportunities. As such, jobs can fall somewhere between the poles of good and bad, averaging out when considering multiple factors (Sengupta et al., 2005). This analysis employed five dimensions and 12 measures but researchers using other measures may produce different results. Our research into 'bad' and 'very bad' part-time jobs will hopefully stimulate further research into the key dimensions of part-time job quality.

## **Conclusions**

This article shows that the proportion of women in part-time jobs in Britain remains



persistently high but there are extreme inequalities in women's part-time jobs, differentiated by occupational class. Women in lower-level jobs, both part- *and* full-time, bore the brunt of the worst effects of the recession. The quality of women's lower-level full-time jobs moved downwards, drawing closer to the worst jobs of all, held by part-time working women. Women in higher-level part-time jobs appear to have been better cushioned from negative recessionary effects, pulling closer to their full-time peers in job quality. It appears that employers are more willing to sacrifice the quality of lower-level jobs (both full- and part-time), in comparison with higher-level jobs, when resources are stretched, signifying the differential value placed on the women working in such jobs.

Occupational class is critical for the study of women's job quality. Additional research is essential to identify if occupational class disparities among working women continued to deepen. Inequalities in job quality also need to be prioritised among policy-makers. As the *Taylor Review* of 'Good work' stated, it is crucial to adopt goals in Britain both to make currently poor jobs better and to create good new jobs (Taylor, 2017). Both goals must be underpinned by an appreciation of intersections of gender and occupational class if they are to tackle the deeply entrenched inequalities in job quality that are demonstrated in this article.

The SES data were accessed from the UK Data Archive: dataset 10.5255/UKDA-SN-7467-2. The original data creators, the depositors, the copyright holders, the funders and the UK Data Archive bear no responsibility for the analysis or interpretation of the data made in this paper.

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### **Author biographies**

Clare Lyonette is a Principal Research Fellow at the Institute for Employment Research. She has worked on a number of research projects focusing on flexible working, including part-time

working, work-life balance and conflict, career choices and constraints, gender roles, fatherhood, employment and the family, and has published widely in these areas.

Tracey Warren is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Nottingham. Her research interests are in the sociology of work and time, gender and class. This includes work-life balance, part-time jobs, work-time underemployment, financial insecurity and hardship. She has published extensively on these themes.

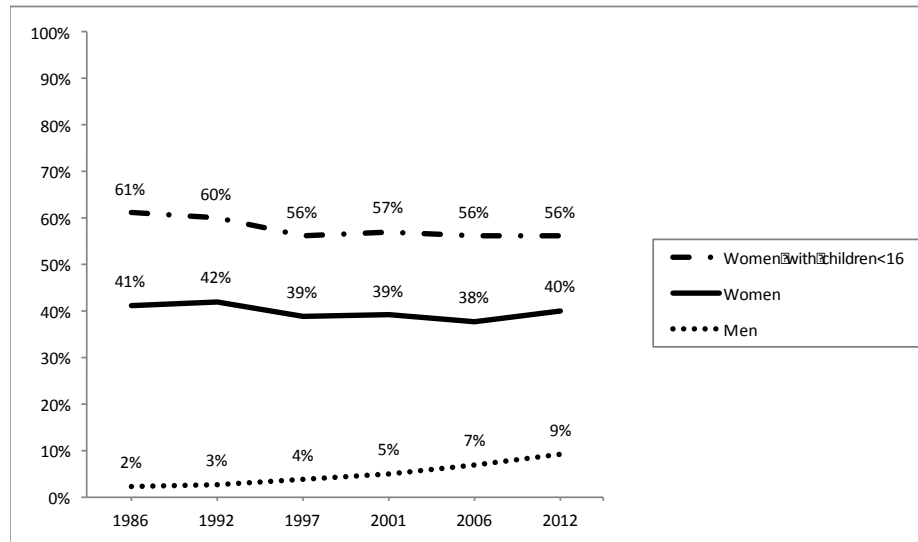
**TABLES AND FIGURES TO BE INSERTED**



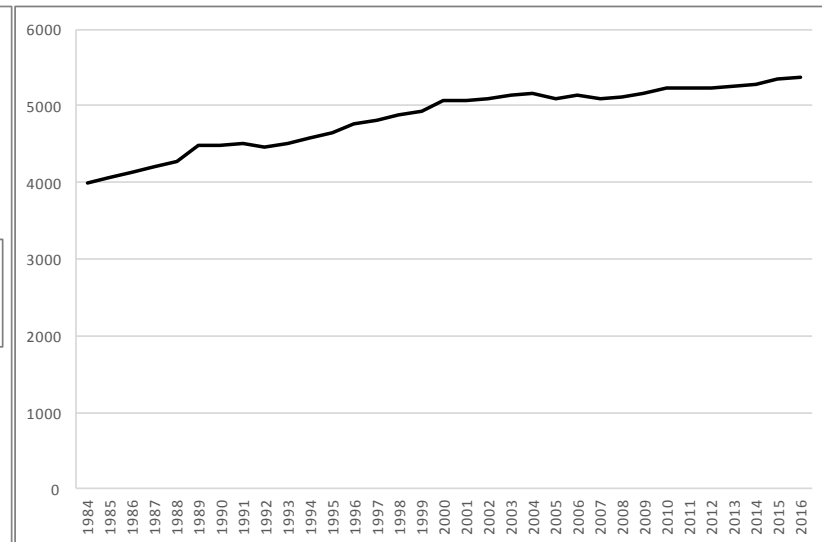
Table 1. Dimensions of job quality.			
	SES variables	Details	'Bad' category
Pay	1. Wages	Hourly gross wage (£s).	Lowest paid third (<£7.50 in 2012, <£6.50 in 2006)
Skill, Training, Discretion	2. Education mismatch	Education level held compared with level required to get the job (ISCED levels 0-4)	Education level held > Education level required to get the job
	3. Learning	'How long did it take for you, after you first started doing this type of job, to learn to do it well?' (6 responses ranging from '<1 month' to 'over 2 years').	Less than a month (the lowermost category available)
	4. Training	'Since completing full-time education, have you ever had, or are you currently undertaking, training for the type of work that you currently do? How long, in total, did/will that training last?' (6 responses from 'No training for the job' to 'Over 2 years')	No training (the lowermost category available)
	5. Discretion	SES scale merging how much influence you personally have on: How hard you work? Deciding what tasks you are to do? Deciding how you are to do the task? Deciding the quality standards to which you work? (each scored 0-3. 3 highest discretion). Scale 0-12.	Scores <2 (lowest quarter of women)
Turnover	6. Job contract	'Permanent', 'Seasonal', 'Fixed', 'Agency temp', 'Casual'	Not permanent (seasonal, fixed, agency temp, casual)
	7. Job loss	'Any chance of job loss in next 12 months?' ('No', 'Yes likely', 'Yes evens', 'Yes unlikely').	Yes likely/Yes evens
Promotion ladders	8. Promotion	'Any chance of promotion in current organization?' ('Definite', 'High', '50/50', 'Low', 'No chance')	No chance (and not at top of organization already)
Work-time	9. Autonomy	'I can decide the time I start and finish work' (4 responses ranging from 'Strongly agree' to 'Strongly disagree').	Strongly disagree
	10. Speed	'How often does your work involve working at very high speed?' (7 responses ranging from 'All the time' to 'Never')	All the time/almost all
	11. Deadlines	'How often does your work involve working to tight deadlines?' (7 responses ranging from 'All the time' to 'Never')	All the time/almost all
	12. Over-time	'I often have to work extra time, over and above the formal hours of my job, to get through the work or to help out' ('Very true', 'True', 'Somewhat', 'Not at all').	Very true

Figure 1. Levels of part-time working.

a. Percentage of employees working part-time in the SES (aged 20-60).



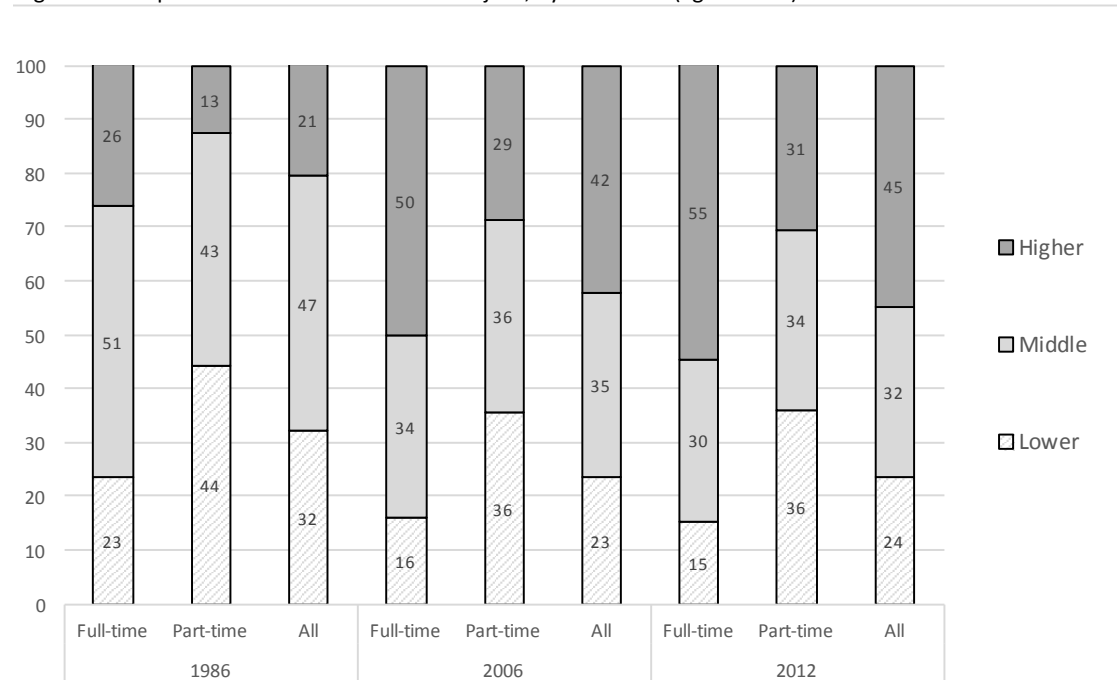
b. Number of female part-time employees, LFS (in thousands).



Source: Authors' analysis of the SES (weighted data)

LFS: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/> April 2017

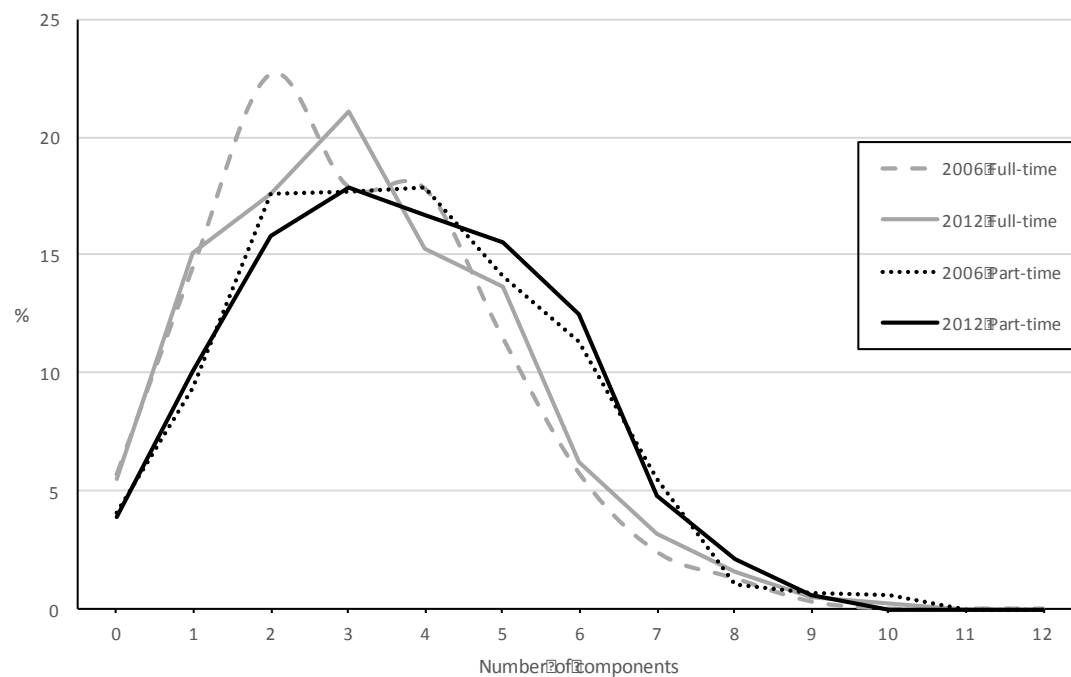
Figure 2.1 Occupational Distribution of Women's Jobs, by Work-time (aged 20-60).



Source: Authors' Analysis of the SES (weighted data)

Table 2. Summary results: 'bad' job quality measures by work-time (women employees aged 20-60).																					
	2006			2012				2006							2012						
								Part-time			Full-time				Part-time			Full-time			
	PT	FT	$\phi^1$	PT	FT	$\phi^1$		Higher	Middle	Lower		Higher	Middle	Lower		Higher	Middle	Lower	Higher	Middle	Lower
% 'Bad' on:																					
1. Wages.	46	24	0.2***	45	24	0.2***		10	42	77		7	34	56		5	39	82	7	32	64
2. Educational mismatch.	47	35	0.1***	41	32	0.1***		25	50	62		22	41	65		19	39	62	16	45	68
3. Learning time.	34	16	0.2***	37	19	0.2***		9	25	59		7	18	41		8	28	64	6	23	52
4. Length of training for job.	46	36	0.1***	50	36	0.2***		27	38	69		25	40	65		29	42	76	27	40	61
5. Discretion.	31	25	0.1***	27	24	0.0		21	24	46		19	24	44		11	26	39	19	26	38
6. Job contract.	7	5	0.0**	9	6	0.1**		10	7	7		6	4	6		16	10	7	7	6	5
7. Job loss.	11	11	0.0	17	17	0.0		12	10	11		11	11	10		24	18	11	15	18	20
8. Promotion.	21	13	0.1***	24	17	0.1***		17	18	28		8	14	25		21	24	26	11	25	22
9. Autonomy.	37	34	0.0	34	31	0.0		28	34	48		28	34	53		21	35	43	25	34	48
10. Speed.	26	31	-0.1**	25	33	-0.1***		24	24	31		31	28	35		17	25	33	33	25	46
11. Deadlines.	36	44	-0.1***	36	47	-0.1***		41	33	33		48	41	40		37	34	38	53	38	45
12. Over-time.	16	32	-0.2***	23	38	-0.2***		28	15	7		43	22	16		38	18	14	48	30	20
% have a 'very bad' job (5+ bad elements)	33	21	0.1***	35	25	0.1***		11	22	58		11	21	51		10	26	65	16	23	63
N: 'very bad' job variable	870	1464		336	563			216	318	336		727	491	247		90	125	121	336	162	89
Source: authors' analysis of the SES (weighted data)																					
<sup>1</sup> $\phi$ in crosstabulations of 'Bad job/Not bad job' and 'Part-time/Full-time'. *** p <0.01 ** p<0.05																					

Figure 3. Number of bad job components (women aged 20-60).



Source: Authors' Analysis of the SES (weighted data)

Table 3. Binary logistic regression models of 'very bad' job quality or not (women employees aged 20-60).											
	2006						2012				
	Odds ratios						Odds ratios				
	1	2	3	4	5		1	2	3	4	5
Part-time ( <i>reference: Full-time</i> )	1.8***		1.1	1.0	1.1		1.6***		1.0	0.6	0.6
Occupation ( <i>reference: Higher</i> )											
Middle		2.1***	2.1***	2.1***	2.0***			1.8***	1.9***	1.6	1.6
Lower		9.9***	9.4***	8.3***	8.1***			10.2***	10.3***	8.9***	8.9***
Interaction: PT by Occupation ( <i>reference: PT*higher</i> )											
PT*Middle level occupation				1.1	1.0					1.9	1.9
PT*Lower level occupation				1.4	1.3					1.8	1.8
Has a child aged < 16					1.0						1.3
Marital status: has a partner					1.4***						1.1
Age ( <i>reference: 20-30</i> )											
31-50					0.7***						1.0
51-60					0.6***						1.6
Constant	0.3***	0.1***	0.1***	0.1***	0.2***		0.3***	0.2***	0.2***	0.2***	0.2***
Cox and Snell R square	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2		0.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
N	2,437	2,437	2,437	2,437	2,437		1,048	1,048	1,048	1,048	1,048
Notes: *** p <0.01 ** p<0.05											
Source: authors' analysis of the SES (weighted data)											

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> All questionnaires are freely available via the *UK Data Archive*.

<sup>ii</sup> Goos and Manning (2007) use wages to differentiate 'lousy' from 'lovely' jobs. McGovern et al. (2004) use pay, sick pay, pensions and promotion ladders to identify 'bad' jobs.

<sup>iii</sup> Other cut-off points were tested e.g. '4+' resulted in too many (over one third) of women working in 'very bad' jobs. It produced similar overall findings for quality by work-time and occupation.

<sup>iv</sup> LFS data show, in 2006, 7% of female part-time workers worked part-time because they could not find a full-time job, rising to 13% by 2012, dropping to 10% in 2016. The highest levels of involuntary part-time employment were in lower occupational groups.

<sup>v</sup>  $\phi$  measures the strength of the association between the two variables. It ranges from -1.0 to +1.0 with -0.3 to +0.3 generally taken to be a weak association.

<sup>vi</sup> Using four dimensions, 62% of the British labour force in 2000 had a job with a bad element in McGovern et al. (2004: 235).